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ABSTRACT

A group of teachers and researchers organized the Written Literacy Forum (WLF) to investigate how research on writing instruction could be made more practical for educators. WLF examined common research assumptions and their effects on formal research presentations, highlighting the surprising lack of effort by researchers to talk with teachers about educational theory. In its search for new research audiences and textual formats, the WLF also investigated the effects of altering such givens as author, audience, format, and purpose on the content and texture of theoretical work. WLF developed a conversational approach to educational research that emphasized both the role of narrative in theories of practice and the social functions of writing about research. (Appendixes include a discussion of the theoretical framework of the forms and functions of writing in the elementary classroom, a sample letter to parents with information on how to involve their children in writing at home, and rules of simulation games and samples of roles to be played by the researcher and principal.) (JD)

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Occasional Paper No. 102

CONVERSATION AND NARRATIVE IN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

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Abstract

The Written Literacy Forum is a group of teachers and researchers investigating how research on writing instruction can be made more meaningful to educators. During the Forum's deliberations, the following questions were raised: For what audiences and purposes is educational research conducted? What linguistic forms are used to represent research knowledge? How does that knowledge differ from the knowledge of the practitioner? What is the relative status of each kind of knowledge? This paper reports the ways in which the Forum's deliberations about educational research have encouraged its members to articulate and examine their assumptions about what researchers and teachers claim to know, how they express that knowledge, and the views they hold of themselves and each other as professionals.

CONVERSATION AND NARRATIVE IN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH[1]

Susan Florio-Ruane[2]

Introduction

Until a few years ago, I worked with teachers chiefly in two ways as I researched their practice. Trained as an ethnographer, I knew teachers as informants on classroom life. From that experience, I learned the value of inviting the collaboration of teachers in framing research questions and in collecting and occasionally analyzing classroom data. Typically, however, these close working relationships changed or ended when, like my anthropologist forebears, I left the field to write the reports of my research.

Mentioning that I left the field to write research reports may seem trivial. There is, after all, a division of labor in education whereby teachers teach and researchers theorize about teaching and learning. But, as I hope this paper will demonstrate, leaving teachers out of the deliberative and expressive phases of research may not only create communication gaps between teachers and researchers, but also may limit the quality and usefulness of educational research.

In writing this paper I have drawn from my experience as a member of a group called the Written Literacy Forum. The Forum involves researchers

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[1] Paper prepared for presentation at the Meadow Brook Research Symposium: Collaborative Action Research in Education. Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, January 20-23, 1985, and to be published in C. S. Witherell, N. Noddings, and A. Duran (Eds.), Lives in Narrative: The Use of Subjective Accounts in Educational Research and Practice. New York: Teachers College Press.

[2] Susan Florio-Ruane is coordinator of the Written Literacy Forum and associate professor of teacher education at Michigan State University.

from Michigan State University[3/4] and teachers from the public schools in East Lansing, Michigan, working together to derive useful insights from research on the teaching of writing. Our efforts to identify and communicate useful knowledge have changed our thinking about research. Starting with published reports of research, and then reading, discussing, and transforming them, we have come to realize that science is, in Popper's words, "a branch of literature" (cited in Olson, 1980, p. 97). As such, scientific research in education is subject to many of the same questions one can ask about other texts:

1. Who are the authors and audiences of educational research?
2. For what purposes do people speak and write about practice?
3. What are the topics about which researchers write? How do they differ from those of concern to teachers?
4. How do social position and the functions of communication in their professional lives limit and shape teachers' and researchers' communication of what they know?

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[3] Accepting sole responsibility for the paper, the author would like to thank the past and present members of the Written Literacy Forum for many conversations that helped to clarify many of the ideas presented here. They are, in alphabetical order, Christopher M. Clark, James Colando, JoAnn B. Dohanich, Saundra Dunn, Janis Elmore, Wayne Hastings, June Martin, Rhoda Maxwell, William Metheny, Marilyn Peterson, Sylvia Stevens, and Daisy Thomas. The author would like to thank one Forum member, Saundra Dunn, for her very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

[4] Bibace and Walsh in their paper, "Conflict of Roles: On the Difficulties of Being Both Scientist and Practitioner in One Life" (1982) point out that in most retrospective accounts of the inquiry process, the exact sequence of ideas and events is "laundered." Citing Fleck (in Shapin, 1980), they note that

> the activities of constituting scientific facts involve "a meandering and diffuse process" which becomes through memory, a "reconstruction, a straight and goal-directed process, the result of clear individual intentions." (Bibace & Walsh, 1982, p. 389)

Thus my account of the Written Literacy Forum, like all stories and scientific reports, subtly transforms "what happened" by its reconstruction of real-time events as narrative. The paper should be read with this in mind.

A Practical Problem Concerning Theory

Several years ago, after extended fieldwork in two classrooms, my research colleagues and I withdrew to the university to theorize and write about problems of writing instruction. Emerging nearly a year later,

> the researchers held in one hand a two-hundred page technical report titled, "Schooling and the Acquisition of Written Literacy," and in the other, a five-page Xeroxed report called, "Findings of Practical Significance." The researchers stared at these two documents and wondered why their close and careful research had yielded so few findings of interest to teachers. (Florio-Ruane & Dohanich, 1984, p. 725)

This situation was both troubling and frustrating. The researchers had, after all, heeded nearly a decade of calls to make educational research meaningful by grounding it in everyday classroom realities (Eisner, 1983; Erickson, 1973). One of our primary goals had been to discover and describe beliefs held by teachers and students about writing in their classrooms. But our close contact with teachers and their daily lives during data collection and preliminary analysis apparently did not guarantee that our theoretical accounts would be meaningful to those we had studied or to other teachers.

One of the features of fieldwork research, or what Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to as the "discovery of grounded theory," is that researchers remain close to the phenomena they study. Fieldwork involves the gradual framing and testing of working hypotheses (Geer, 1969). Theory is tentatively formulated and continually open to revision as the researcher proceeds via a process of "analytic induction" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). This explanation is, however, an idealistic and partial account of fieldwork that does not fully acknowledge research as both a social process and a linguistic product.

Our commonsense notion of theorizing is that it is a formal, linguistic activity undertaken chiefly by experts. Like their colleagues in the other social sciences, ethnographers are trained to observe special conventions in their reporting of research findings. Such formal constraints on communication

are intended to ensure the validity of theorists' knowledge claims. Thus the researcher is pressed to report findings in the formal, usually written, language of theory. To do this, the ethnographer has historically withdrawn from informants and taken the steamship home to write one or several monographs for an audience of benefactors and colleagues.

This arrangement is typical in general ethnographies of traditional societies where, according to Scheper-Hughes (1979),

> for the most part anthropologists (as well as the communities studied) have been shielded from any local repercussions and aftershocks resulting from publication because we have traditionally worked in what were until recently "exotic" cultures and among preliterate peoples. In most cases, the "natives" never knew what had been said about them. . . . The anthropologist might, as a professional courtesy, send the village headman or a mestizo mayordomo a copy of the published ethnography which was often proudly displayed in the village. Its contents, however, normally remained as mysterious as the private life of the "masked" white man, that professional lone stranger, who would periodically reappear (sometimes bearing gifts) and then just as inexplicably vanish (not infrequently at the start of the rainy season). Within this traditional fieldwork paradigm our once colonized subjects remained disempowered and mute. (p. v)

In contemporary educational research, distances and language differences separating researchers from those they study are not so great. Moreover there is an assumed applicability of research knowledge to the practical problems of the people studied. Yet surprisingly little effort is made to talk with teachers about the adequacy of educational theory. When such conversations do occur, they are typically initiated by third parties who, in the name of teacher education, are charged with "translating" research for practitioners. Very often, those studied remain as "disempowered and mute" as the "colonized subjects" Scheper-Hughes (1979) describes.

When the researcher moves from conversations with informants and recording notes in the field to public, formal descriptions of informants' knowledge and culture, the nature of research changes. Although researchers

continue to claim that their theories are incomplete and open to challenge, the rendering of those theories in expository prose, graphs, charts, numerical tables and formulas dramatically alters their presentation and limits their audience. Even in case studies, which may contain large amounts of narrative, researchers' published descriptions are static and frozen in the "ethnographic present." In addition, publication, which Stubbs (1982, p. 42) argues amounts to "full standardization and codification" of written language, confers on the social scientist "expert" status and confers on theory the status of "fixed" rather than tentative knowledge.

Thus when we showed our teacher-informants the technical report we had prepared for our funding agency and the articles we had written for our professional journals, we and our texts were received politely, but without enthusiasm. We assumed, with Buchmann (1983), that "for research knowledge to be useful, people must be able to grasp it" (p. 3). But it seemed that our reports were not grasped even by the teachers whose realities they aimed to describe. This does not mean that the teachers did not read and comprehend what we had written. It meant literally that they did not grasp it. People grasp things, reach out to appropriate them, because they have intrinsic attraction or apparent value to them. But the teachers did not reach out and appropriate for their use our formal models of writing in their classrooms or to the case studies we had written to illustrate them (see examples in Appendix A).

The adequacy of ethnographic theorizing rests, at least in part, on the power of the ethnography to resonate with informants' experiences. Again, to quote Scheper-Hughes (1979):

> While it would be implausible to expect that the members of a community would wholeheartedly agree with the outsider's perspective with his or her rendition of their social, cultural and psychological situation, that rendition should not be so foreign or removed from their commonsense interpretation of the meaning of their lives as

> to do violence to it. Any ethnography ultimately stands or falls on the basis of whether or not it resonates: it should ring true, strike a familiar (even if occasionally painful) chord. (p. viii)

The failure of our reports to "ring true" to the experiences of our informants suggested that in our efforts to analyze the structure and function of their everyday activities, we had lost sight of the insiders' perspectives. As the teachers received our reports in polite silence, we wondered why our work lacked vitality, even for those who had a personal stake in it. Did research have anything to say to practice? Had we really talked and listened to our informants while in the field? Did we lose something in the transformation of our experience into formal reports of research? Had we told not-very-good stories about practice or, in our efforts to be rigorous, had we failed to tell any stories at all?

Conversation and Theory

The Written Literacy Forum was created to address these questions. In the fall following the completion of our research reports, we invited the teachers in whose classrooms we had worked to participate in a series of conversacions about the findings of the research. For several school years, the group met in classrooms, homes, and at the university. The questions that came to guide our meetings were the following:

1. Of the many potential "findings" of in our research, which were of most importance and use to teachers? To student teachers? To administrators? To researchers?

2. What formats for sharing the research would be best suited to the content? The audience? The social setting?

3. What is the nature of communication among various interest groups in education? How are differences in status and role reflected in participants' knowledge and ways of communicating?

Our aim in creating the Forum was not to teach or translate research findings to teachers, but rather to talk and listen in a way different from our previous collaboration. Buchmann (1983) has advocated conversation as an

alternative to argumentation when researchers and educators meet. This alternative offers a way to transcend status differences that usually separate teachers and researchers. In addition, conversation admits of more and different sources of information about practice. To this end, Buchmann (1983) observes that "what makes conversation attractive is its reciprocal quality, the breadth of subject matter and variety of voices compatible with it, and the surprising turns it may take" (p. 3). In conversation, Buchmann argues, theory is forced to share the floor with practitioners' knowledge and all participants are encouraged to address the values implicit in the work they do.

Although the conversational model captures what we hoped to achieve in the Forum, the early going was not smooth. Because of our unspoken assumptions about the status and role of teachers and researchers, conversation--an activity which seems so natural in some situations--was initially halting. When, for example, the researchers attempted to set an open tone for the Forum meetings by urging that all members participate in setting the group's weekly agenda, we were surprised to find that this idea was not welcomed by the teachers. One teacher summarized it this way:

> When you start talking about us handling the agenda, I can think of agenda items, but I think that you have the overall picture and I'm really not sure I want you to abdicate that responsibility, really. (Transcript of Forum Meeting Tape, 10/14/81)

Later, as I reflected on this situation in my notes, I wrote:

> These feelings of unease get me to thinking. I wonder first about trying to establish a truly open discourse or dialogue between members of the community of research and the community of practice. If our group operated in a social vacuum, where it was not important how the larger society was organized, we might very handily have provided for an open discourse by allowing the agenda to arise in conversation. Unfortunately, we do not operate in such a vacuum. No matter how we look at it, the researchers had the bulk of the power in the previous study, and, in general we have more power than teachers when it comes to deciding what it is important to research in education and why. . . . It strikes me that it may take some more initiative on our part, indeed, more leadership, to encourage discourse within which we can achieve the noncoercive

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> atmosphere we'd hoped for. Put simply, I have come to the realization that in a social world that is unequal, you don't get a democratic or open conversation simply by saying that everybody's free to talk. What we may have to do is be more thoughtful about how to organize the conversation such that we relieve the teachers from the obligation of trying to say or do the "right" thing to please us. (Memo, 11/6/81)

We decided to work toward conversation as a way of confronting problems of socially negotiated nature of knowledge. As ethnographers we hoped to understand and represent teachers' understandings. But we had recently discovered that we missed (or misrepresented) much of what was closest to the heart of the matter for teachers of writing. These problems did not seem to be ones we could repair merely by "translating" our research into less technical language. Instead, they were fundamental problems of interpretation and values. We reasoned that these needed to be addressed by open and extended conversation with the teachers about the research, its reporting, and its potential use to them and their peers. Conversation was therefore not secondary to our research. It was a critical stage in the inquiry process, essential if our research was to succeed in uncovering and communicating educators' understandings. In this light, Van Manen (1977) writes that conversation

> is a type of dialogue which is not adversative but, as Socrates expressed it, "like friends talking together." This programmatic idea of method as friendly dialogue characterizes all phenomenological social science." (p. 218)

Narrative and Theory

Conversation as a research method is very likely to yield stories as data. If we want to understand people's understanding, we are apt to discover meaning in their stories since, in Joan Didion's (1979) words,

> We tell ourselves stories in order to live. We live. . . by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the "ideas" with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience. (p. 11)

The Forum's conversations were opportunities for teachers and researchers to depart from formal recording or reporting of research and tell each other stories of what they knew about the teaching of writing. These discussions were rich and stimulating. They increased our sense that we needed to create better ways to represent knowledge about educational practice than we had done thus far.

Creating compelling, valid accounts of native knowledge is a perennial problem for anthropologists. Historically anthropologists have handled the tension between narrative and structural accounts of cultural knowledge in a number of ways. Some have kept it hidden--Malinowski, for example, kept a vivid and detailed diary of his Trobriand fieldwork and published, instead, his monograph Argonauts of the Western Pacific, Malinowski's diary, now read instructively alongside Argonauts, was published posthumously by his wife. Similarly, Laura Bohannon published a powerful narrative account of her fieldwork among the Tiv of West Africa in the book Return to Laughter. Bohannan wrote about experiences she was unable to convert into the expository language of the monograph. But she felt it necessary to do so under the pen name Elenore Smith Bowen. Earlier she published scholarly monographs of the same fieldwork under her own name.

More recently, the tension has been brought out in the open. Geertz, for example, published in one text both his narrative account of the Balinese cock fight and an analysis of it (Geertz, 1972). Others, like Carlos Casteneda and Jean Auel have written fiction for which they desire the label "ethnography, " and controversies about their books have been seen even in the popular press (Randall, 1984, p. 1). Apparently, if science is, in fact, a branch of literature, presentation matters. It matters to the quality of the work and to relationships between author and text, audience and text, author and audience. In this light, Hymes (1980) writes,

> Some of what we believe we know about cultural patterns and worlds is interpretable in terms of structure, whether the ingredients of the structure be lines, graphs, numbers, letters, or abstract terms. Some of what we believe we know resists interpretation in terms of structure. It seems to require, instead, presentation. (p.98)

The Role of Narrative in Theories of Practice

Recently, applied social scientists have argued that it is essential to incorporate practitioners' knowledge in explanatory models of their work (Schon, 1984). Kleinman (1983), for example, points out that in applied fields, molecular theories are often used to explain complex phenomena (e.g., biomedical theories to explain disease or psychological theories to explain learning). This situation creates a gap between our theoretical explanations and the problems experienced by practitioners. In addition, molecular theorizing often relegates to the status of folk wisdom the meaning systems of both practitioners and clients, leaving their knowledge and their interactions undervalued and unrepresented in our explanatory systems (p.540).

The limitations of such theorizing become particularly visible in stubborn or difficult cases (e.g., chronic pain or the chronic difficulties of economically disadvantaged children to learn to read). These cases call for theories that incorporate the dynamic, transactional aspects of processes such as healing or teaching. According to Kleinman, in moving beyond reductionist explanations to contextual ones, we begin to derive not only more adequate explanations of phenomena but achieve insights more useful to practitioners.

In teacher education, Erickson (1979) further argues that to move toward such theories, practitioners' knowledge and meaning systems must be tapped as part of the explanatory process. Isolated descriptions of classroom procedure or measures of behavioral outcomes of those procedures may miss, to use

Kleinman's phrase, the "very heart" of the process, whether that process be healing as it occurs in the transaction between doctor and patient or conceptual change as it occurs between teacher and student.

To document and analyze these transactions, Erickson (1982) recommends the crafting of "stories of teaching and learning" in which practitioners play key author roles. These stories have a number of advantages. First, primed by research experiences, teachers can add richness and validity to accounts of their work by uncovering and sharing their own "implicit theories" about teaching and learning (Clark & Yinger, 1979). Second, stories are representations of knowledge that do not dodge moral consequences and, to the extent that teaching is a "moral craft" as well as an array of technical skills, stories of teaching may represent that craft more adequately than research monographs (Ryan, 1981; Tom, 1985). Third, teachers' stories are a largely untapped source of information about teaching and an opportunity for teachers to communicate about their work to others. Bringing teachers' stories into the canon of educational literature may confer special status on both the authors and their stories. About this, educator Roland Barth has written,

> A primary motivation is the satisfaction and recognition that comes from seeing one's ideas in print and knowing that others also see them. Writing about practice lends legitimacy to both writer and practice. Most school people feel that education is an important, worthwhile endeavor, but can't help but be influenced by society's low regard for their profession. In the view of many educators, education is important but not quite important enough. Being a teacher or a principal and a writer is more prestigious than being 'just' a teacher. (cited in Sugarman, 1984, p. 6)

Persuasive as these arguments may seem, they defy commonly accepted dichotomies drawn between theory and practice, speaking and writing, text and utterance. Olson (1980) summarizes these generally accepted dichotomies by contrasting "explicit written prose statements" (text) with more "informal oral language statements" (utterance):

> Utterance and text may be contrasted at any one of several levels: the linguistic modes themselves--written language versus oral language; their usual usages--conversation, story-telling, verse, and song for the oral mode versus statements, arguments, and essays for the written mode; their summarizing forms--proverbs and aphorisms for the oral mode versus premises for the written mode; and finally, the cultural traditions built around these modes--an oral tradition versus a literate tradition. (p. 85)

Not only are these activities sharply distinguished, but they are also commonly stratified so that the progress of development, both within the individual and in societies, is thought to be from oral to literate, a movement toward "increasing explicitness with language increasingly able to stand as an unambiguous or autonomous representation of meaning" (Olson, 1977, p. 85).

These sharp demarcations between speech and writing and the clear superiority accorded the essay for the telling of factual truth have had implications for our professional literature. It is not surprising, given these assumptions, that as fields such as anthropology and education have sought "professionalization" and have become more technical in their orientations, they have tended in their reporting to leave out practitioners' stories and silence their voices rather than to feature them (Hale, 1972; Schon, 1984).

The Social Functions of Writing About Research

One of the limitations of taxonomies of oral and literate language is that they fail to acknowledge the powerful connections between language forms and the social functions they accomplish. To this end, taxonomies not only idealize actual speech and writing, but they can also reinforce the social differences and boundaries separating speech communities. As applied researchers, we need to look beyond static taxonomies of language forms and ask how language functions for its users--whether those users be researchers publishing reports for an audience of their peers or teachers using anecdotes

to explain their educational approaches to interested parents. According to Stubbs (1982), be it essay or story, text or utterance,

> more than anything, language is an activity motivated by users' needs to make things known in particular ways for particular purposes and to establish and maintain common understandings with other conversants; the form of a particular text is always determined as much by the conversants' need to function in these situations as it is by whatever it is they wish to describe. (p. 10)

Teachers and researchers communicate differently about the practice of teaching. First, teachers have relatively less opportunity than researchers to communicate about teaching to their peers or other audiences. Second, when teachers engage in talk or writing about teaching, their audiences and purposes in doing so may be quite different from those of researchers. Third, the topics about which teachers choose to speak and write may be quite different than those selected by researchers. Finally, teachers and researchers typically read different kinds of texts about teaching and for different purposes.

If, as Foucault (1972, 1977), Kuhn (1970), and others have argued, a professional field is actually a loosely associated collection of communities of discourse (what Gumperz, 1971, called "speech communities"), then it is not surprising that different members of our field would have different purposes for and ways of talking about knowledge concerning teaching and learning. If we further acknowledge that there are not simple dichotomies between oral and literate language or theoretical and practical knowledge, and embrace, instead, the metaphor of multiple speech communities comprising a field, we begin to see that both the knowledge people have and the ways they represent knowledge are to a great extent shaped by their social places and purposes.

Precisely because it was organized as a forum, a place for teachers and researchers to talk with one another, our group was a novel speech community.

We brought to its membership people heretofore separated in their ways and opportunities to talk about teaching. Gradually we learned how to converse with one another as we talked, read, and wrote together. In the process, we identified new audiences for our research and created new textual formats for reaching them. In altering such givens as author, audience, format, and purpose, we also transformed the content of our theoretical work.

Forum Texts

Table 1 is a summary of the oral and written reports of research prepared in the year prior to the Forum and in the first year of its existence. Note that in the year before the creation of the Forum the major text produced was a long monograph (progress report) whose audience was the agency funding the study. In addition to reporting for the funding agency, the researchers wrote book chapters and journal articles for vaguely defined audiences. About this type of academic writing, Stubbs (1982) observes:

> A peculiar feature of some academic articles is that it is not certain who their audience is going to be. If the articles are on topics of potentially wide, general interest (such as reading and writing), they are likely to be prepared with ill-defined social groups in mind, such as teachers, researchers, or the man in the street. (p. 31)

Unlike the articles and chapters, oral presentations given at meetings of research societies or at university colloquia that year were intended for the limited audience of other researchers. These presentations were notable for their text-like quality. The speakers retained control of the floor. Listeners were not permitted to speak except when a brief question-answer period was provided, time was strictly limited, and speakers' remarks were drawn from previously written texts.

The initiation of the Forum led to the creation of new forms of text and talk. While the researchers continued to write academic articles and reports, these articles changed in three ways. First, some of the articles were

Table 1

Texts Reporting Research Before and After Initiation of the Written Literacy Forum

Pre-Forum (authored by researchers)
Technical report (including theoretical model and case studies)
"Findings of practical significance"
Journal articles
Book chapters
Notes for conference presentations and colloquia
Forum (authored by teachers and researchers)
Quarterly progress reports
Simulation game, "Negotiating Entry"
Hand-outs for roundtable discussions
Displays of children's writing
Journal articles
Revised case studies with study guides
Autobiography

coauthored by teachers in the Forum. Second, the progress reports and academic articles, which had constituted the bulk of research reporting in Year 1, amounted only to a small part of the reporting undertaken by the Forum. And third, Forum members clarified the intended audiences and purposes for the reporting of research. With the clarification of audience and purpose came a reinterpretation and transformation of the study's major findings.

Identifying Audiences and Purposes

In the course of Forum conversations, the purpose of our group evolved to reflect not only researchers' concerns about the utility and validity of their reporting, but practitioners' concerns as well. For teachers, the Forum offered an opportunity to give and receive moral support and to serve others in their profession. The following comment from a Forum teacher illustrates:

> I wonder if it's not so much what we found out, but the whole process we went through. For people to change or to accept what we found out, they have to go through the process, too. And that it's not very easy . . . to become close to people and risk to say that you're a failure, or that you've had failures in these areas. I remember when I taught school in Pennsylvania--it was a small school, there were only about 10 teachers. It took three years before everyone got to know each other in the building well enough to start talking about the problems they had. . . . They were afraid that they were admitting that they couldn't handle it, that there was something wrong with them, when in reality everybody was having the same problems. And what we've done has taken a long time to establish, and no matter what we find here, we're going to have to tell people that you just don't change overnight. (Forum Transcript, 10/14/81)

Trying to communicate this message to other teachers, we adopted the rhetorical tactic of starting with an audience and a purpose for communicating about research. From there we worked back to our study--its raw data, polished reports, the stories they evoked--and began to draft plans for oral and written presentations. Audiences for whom we ultimately wrote and spoke included prospective and experienced teachers, educational researchers, and curriculum specialists in language arts.

Figure 1 is a model that rhetorician Himley (cited in Nystrand, 1982) has devised to relate text to social context. All text exists along a continuum of social distance between author and audience. When author and audience are close to one another in social distance, they share a wealth of contextual knowledge. Thus the text they write for one another is exophoric in reference. Much of the information needed to interpret the text remains outside it in the store of shared experience of writer and reader/listener.

In contrast, when social distance between author and audience is increased, reference becomes endophoric. Here text needs to provide for the lack of shared background knowledge between author and audience. Endophoric text carries much of the contextual knowledge needed to for its interpretation and is therefore more self-referencing than exophoric text.

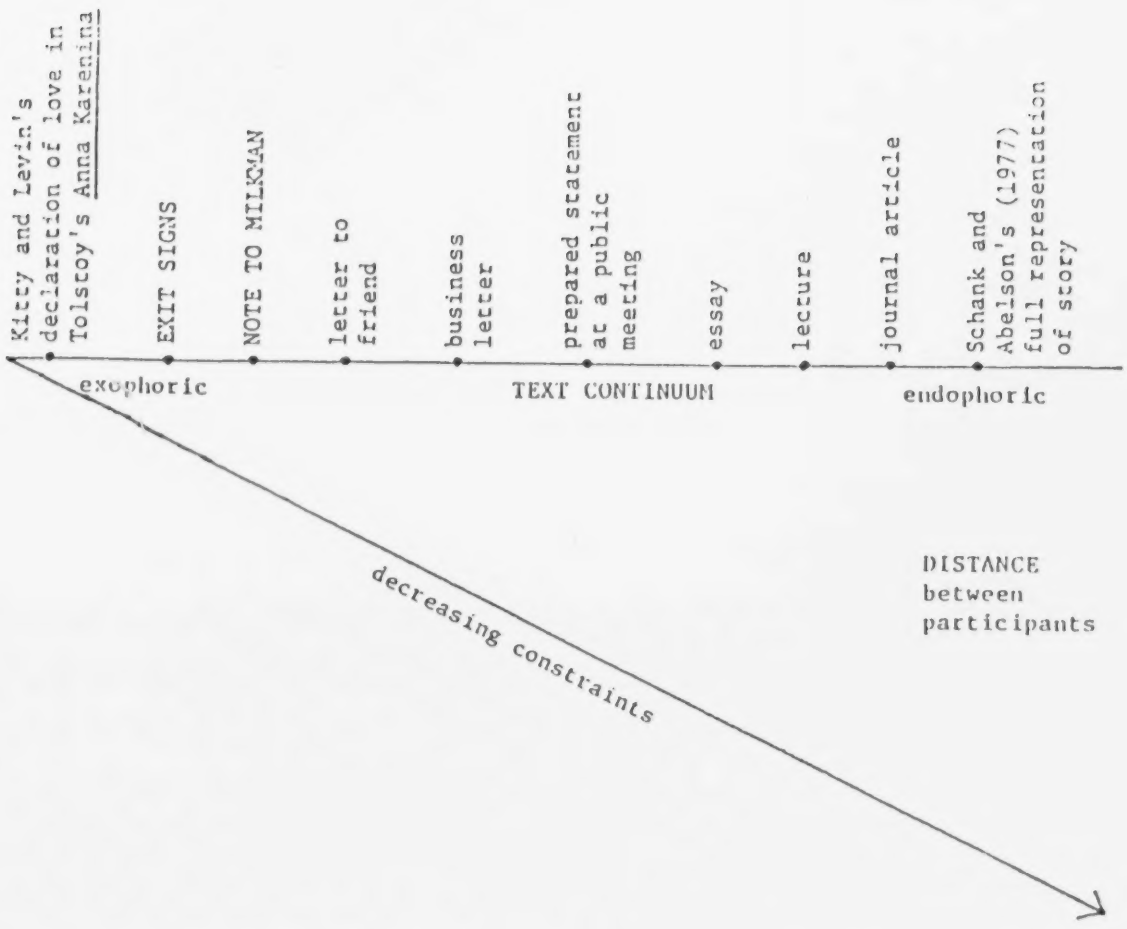

Figure 1. Relationship of text to social context (from Himley, cited in Nystrand, 1982, p. 10).

In light of this continuum, one can see how audience and purpose are intimately related to decisions about presentation. Both endophoric and exophoric references have strengths and weaknesses depending on one's audience and purpose when reporting research. Although the essay or the lecture, for example, may be ideal for reporting to a distant or ill-defined audience, it can lose the author's voice. In preparing a text that can stand by itself, the author is rendered virtually anonymous. There is virtually no

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room in this sort of writing for the nuance, the vivid anecdote, or the telling joke. As Frake (1981) says, "I imagine it is difficult to tell a joke in first-order predicate calculus" (p. 5).

On the other hand, exophoric reference is of limited value in highly technical writing or when communicating with an unknown audience. Its reliance on shared understanding between reader and writer can make it cryptic or uninterpretable when those understandings do not exist. Yet exophoric reference has great power to evoke in the reader who shares its context images of his or her own experiences that resonate with those drawn on by the author. When the writer knows his or her audience and what he or she knows, the wri-er can craft a text that is evocative. Both writer and reader participate in the creation of such a text's meaning (Rosenblatt, 1978).

When researchers write for ill-defined audiences in their academic reporting of research, their work frequently falls in the endophoric part of the continuum. Because there is great distance between author and audience, much contextual information has to be included. In addition, in scientific writing, the rigors of formal research reporting make additional demands. Research texts are quintessential essays in which the author is rendered virtually anonymous, text can stand by itself, and the audience is unknown and distant. But what happens when these texts are expected to bear the burdens of both truthfulness and meaningfulness--when they are invoked to instruct and move practitioners? They tend to break under the rhetorical burden.

In the Forum, we discovered that as we began to identify and write for more specific audiences we were better able to consider what these audiences might already know, what they might want to learn more about, or what they could bring to the interpretation of our work. We ventured into genres that were less self-referencing but more vivid, evocative, and immediate. Our

communication became less constrained by rules of formal argumentation and, in fact, began to blend oral and written language, narrative and explanation in novel ways. Among the kinds of texts we prepared to share research were simulation games, letters, autobiographies and other personal narratives, and displays of artifacts of children's writing. Most of these texts were open-ended and allowed their audiences to "complete the story." Even in oral presentations, Forum teachers rejected formal presentations to their colleagues. Instead, they created roundtable formats that blended written materials with some oral presentation and considerable discussion (see Appendix B).

The Forum teachers also suggested a change in our view of researchers as an audience. They proposed writing about the process of negotiation of entry into a school site in order to study it successfully. To teach researchers what we had learned about this, the Forum chose to design a simulation game that could be played by fledgling researchers before they ever took a step into the field. In so doing, the Forum wrote dramatic scenarios, character sketches, and follow-up ideas for discussion. It was left to the audiences to negotiate among themselves the actual plot line for each simulation (see Appendix C).

Finally, the Forum revisited the case studies written for the original technical report. In the course of Forum discussions, we sought a clearer audience for these texts. The potential of new texts to offer vivid, vicarious experiences of teaching and the opportunity to revisit those experiences suggested they would be useful texts for preservice teachers. Thus the case studies were revised, edited both to make them more richly descriptive and to include a series of open-ended discussion questions to guide their use by teacher educators and students.

Text, Audience, and Values

Figure 2 locates the various pre-Forum and Forum texts in a model typifying our ordinary societal assumptions about the dichotomies between oral and written language, text and utterance (Stubbs, 1982). Note that when we plot the Forum's activities and texts here, the bulk of the group's own communication would be considered "casual"--even at times, "nonstandard." Talk, by definition in such a system, has essentially little formal or public value.

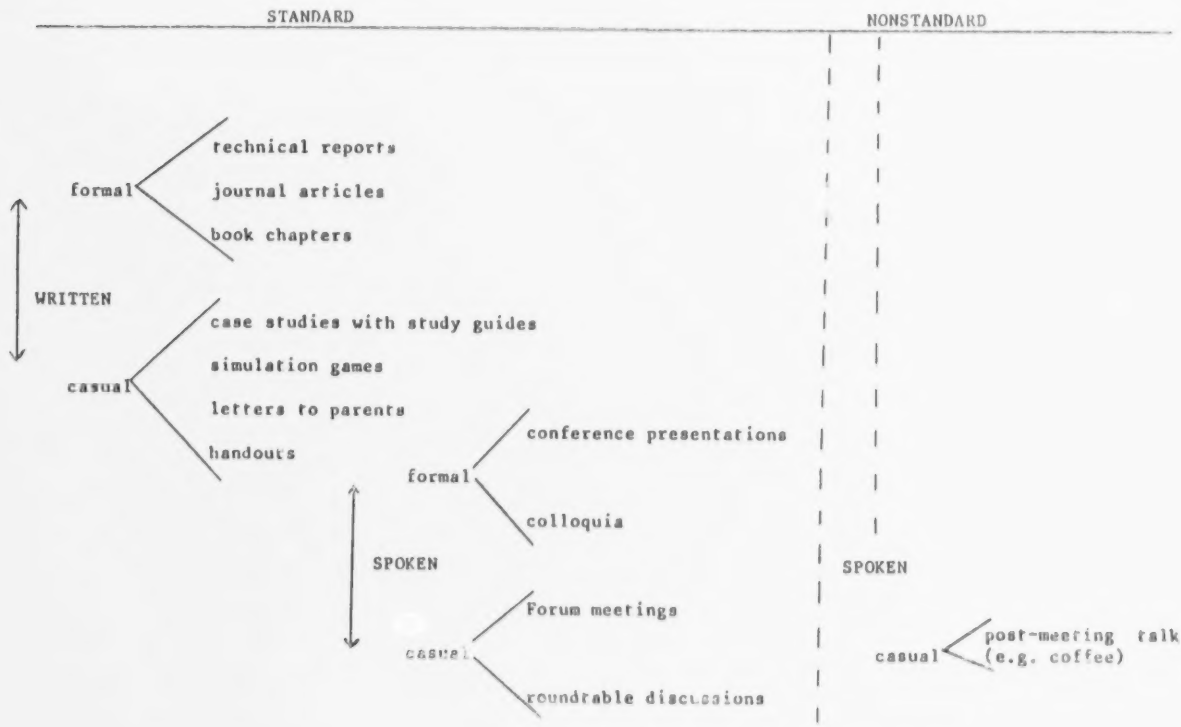

Figure 2. Forum Texts and the common view of the relation between spoken and written language (modified from Stubbs, 1982, p. 40).

In addition, note that, whether written or spoken, Forum-authored texts would tend to fall in the "casual" part of the continuum, research reports in the "formal." This formal/casual distinction underscores the status

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differences between teacher- and researcher-held knowledge and the differential value likely to be attributed to them. Moreover, ranking the expository accounts of research as formal and standard and relegating conversation, narrative--and participants' voices--to the casual and nonstandard domains risks, in Frake's (1981) terms, "making the smart people look dumb." Highly systematic, endophoric accounts of native knowledge, Frake continues, achieve their ends "by framing out of view the contexts within which people display their smartness in their own worlds" (p. 6).

The Forum created the opportunity for several things to change with respect to this formal/casual distinction. First, the forum provided for the public expression of knowledge from both teacher and researcher sources. Second, to the extent that these rigid boundaries are held in our field, the Forum encouraged teachers and researchers to risk crossing them. It was now possible for teachers to make formal presentations and author articles and chapters (something heretofore not done by them) just as it engaged researchers in more open give-and-take with specific and diverse audiences in education. In this sense, there was movement out of the safety of isolation in the "theoretical" or the "practical," the "formal" or the "casual" domains.

The Knowledge Worth Reporting

Olson (1980) summarized our ordinary assumptions about theoretical and practical knowledge by observing that "truth in oral utterance has to do with truth as wisdom . . . . Truth in prose text, however, has to do with the correspondence between statements and observations" (p.104). These distinctions have been called into question recently with some arguing that practitioners often base their knowledge claims on systematic hypothesis-testing (Schon, 1984) and others pointing out that research is not value-neutral or disinterested (Eagleton, 1983). Meier (1982) observes that the link between

formal written discourse and formal knowledge has served, since the Greeks, to exclude whole classes of knowledge and keep them embedded and preserved in oral tradition. She notes that French scholar Michel Foucault

> refers to such excluded knowledges as "subjugated knowledges," knowledges whose validity is not dependent on the approval of established regimes of thought, [but which have also] been systematically disqualified from the established hierarchy of knowledges and sciences. (p. 21)

It is noteworthy that Foucault also argues that these subjugated knowledges contain most of the "historical knowledge of struggles" within a community. Because they remain outside parameters of scientific discourse, Foucault argues that they "provide society with the only viable source of critical reflection upon its own taken-for-granted assumptions" (Meier, 1982, p. 21). It can be argued that teachers' stories represent subjugated knowledge of this sort. As such their inclusion in research reporting potentially enriches theories about practice and also renders accounts of practice more vivid and moving. In addition, to the extent that teachers' stories are framed out of the boundaries of scientific knowledge about practice, it is likely that teachers will view research as disconnected from their knowledge and concerns.

In the Forum, teachers' knowledge and researchers' knowledge were brought head-to-head. There was a great deal to which the researchers had not paid attention while in the field or when writing their reports. Much of what we failed to hear or see or represent can be thought of in terms of the efforts of teachers and students to achieve written literacy in the complex institutional setting of public school. Time and again as we reviewed and revised texts about our research, we realized that in focusing on "the classroom" or "teaching" or "written literacy," researchers had made many tacit

assumptions. Our views and depictions of the teaching and learning of writing tended to be telescopic, our portrayals of classroom life and lessons static.

The Forum teachers found most important in our research many details we had overlooked in our initial reporting. They were particularly struck, for example, by the contextual constraints to teaching writing that arise from outside the classroom. They saw in our notes and reports the possibility of powerful presentations about the multiple and conflicting forces that work on them as they teach children to read and write. Many people have a stake in literacy education--teachers, parents, children, administrators, politicians, textbook publishers, and the press. Teachers operate as mediators, making moment-to-moment decisions and long-range plans that aim to balance competing definitions of literacy, competing demands on their time, limited and somewhat ad hoc resources, against their own talents, values, and skills. This in many ways was the heart of a story about the teaching of writing that we ultimately came to tell together.

Incorporating the teachers' voices and stories into texts for diverse audiences taught us that not all knowledge can be represented by structural models. Because our initial formal accounts were biased toward the typical, they were unable to capture conflict, compromise, and change. In story and conversation we had access to a great many more of the tensions and contradictions in teachers' work. Whereas a year before we would have waited patiently for teachers to vent their complaints about the district or the principal before getting down to talking about how they teach writing, we now realized that those concerns were intimately tied to teaching writing.

In the Forum we grew to realize that sometimes a story or a conversation is the best way to represent or share some important kinds of knowledge. We also grew to appreciate that such forms of language are not extraneous to inquiry but central to a valid portrayal of teachers' work. We also found,

as we met and talked with practitioners that, to the degree that we admitted of and encouraged the voicing of their knowledge, teachers warmed to ideas that research had to offer them as well. One teacher expressed her growing insight as follows:

> I guess I felt really good about getting with the group because my coming to East Lansing was . . . well, I was thinking how valuable all of you were in terms of support people . . . for the first move here. It was like I felt you were friends who cared about me rather than researchers. It just did something really special, and it also opened up some new ways of looking at teaching writing. I had never really thought about it. Perhaps I had done it haphazardly, and then this gave some rhyme and reason. And I think it was a good feeling to be able to talk with other teachers. I had not had the opportunity in my past teaching experience to sit down and talk about the kind of things we'd done in the classroom. And beyond being able to talk with immediate colleagues, we could talk with people out of the university, which was a really good learning experience. I got a balance on both sides. (Forum Transcript, 10/14/81)

Once we began conversations with one another, we learned a great deal more about the processes of teaching and learning writing in school than any of us could have learned in isolation. Insights came from looking at data together and talking about what was there, what was missing, what we had represented, and what we had failed to capture in our reports. That effort productively blurred distinctions between talk and writing, research and practical knowledge, inquiry and teacher education. In the process we believe we created new ways of speaking, writing, and knowing about practice.

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Appendix A

Theoretical Framework of the Forms and Functions of Writing in an Elementary Classroom

Theoretical framework of the forms and functions of writing in an elementary classroom

FUNCTION TYPE	SAMPLE ACTIVITY	DISTINCTIVE FEATURES						
		INITIATOR	COMPOSER	WRITER/ SPEAKER	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	FATE	EVALUATION
TYPE I: WRITING TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY	classroom rule-setting	teacher	teacher & students	teacher	student	by teacher and students: drafted on chalkboard; printed in colored marker on large white paper	posted; referred to when rules are broken	no
TYPE II: WRITING TO KNOW ONESELF AND OTHERS	diaries	teacher	student	student	student	by teacher: written or printed on lined paper in student-made booklets	locked in teacher's file cabinet or kept in student desk; occasionally shared with teacher, other students, or family	no
TYPE III: WRITING TO OCCUPY FREE TIME	letters and cards	student	student	student	other (parents, friends, family)	by student: printed or drawn on lined or construction paper	kept; may be given as gift to parents or friend	no
TYPE IV: WRITING TO DEMONSTRATE ACADEMIC COMPETENCE	science lab booklets	teacher	publisher	publisher & student(s)	teacher	by publisher: printed in commercial booklet	checked by teacher; filed for later use by student; pages sent home to parents by teacher	yes

Appendix B

Teacher Roundtable Handouts and

Sample Letter to Parents

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN WRITING AT HOME

During 1979-81 a naturalistic study of schooling and the acquisition of written literacy was conducted in two classrooms, a combined second and third and a sixth grade, by members of a research team from the Institute for Research on Teaching at Michigan State University. The first ten months of the study consisted of extensive participant observation, interviewing, teacher journal keeping, sampling of student writing, and videotaping of occasions for writing in these two classrooms. The four teachers involved in the study (two focal teachers and their teammates) were active throughout the project as research collaborators who helped to shape the inquiry and to give direction to the data interpretations.

Through the course of the study it became evident that writing and its instruction were meaningfully organized not into discrete units such as lessons, but into broader units of related activities that integrated a range of skills and served broad social and academic functions. Literacy resides not entirely in the production of documents, but also in a complex of social roles, expressive purposes, and resources for writing. These broader units were labelled occasions for writing. These occasions have four functions:

1. writing to participate in community,
2. writing to know oneself and others,
3. writing to occupy free time,
4. writing to demonstrate academic competence.

These functions allow parents to become actively involved in the process of developing their children's writing ability and competency in skill areas--the acquisition of written literacy. Writing does not exist as a self-contained subject area limited by the school curriculum and the classroom teacher. To help families become actively involved in writing the following letter, based on the four functions of writing, was developed. In its present form the letter can be sent home to families at the end of the school year as an idea list for the summer. With modification of the introductory and closing paragraphs, it becomes a useful tool at open houses, conferences times, PTA meetings. Use your imagination to adapt it to your needs.

Jo Ann Burak Dohanich
Formerly of Donley
Elementary School

Dear Family,

Parents often ask what they can do to help their children over the summer vacation. Writing is one area that you can concentrate on to help your child improve in all skill areas.

You can help your child to become a better writer by providing occasions for meaningul writing practice. Someone once said, "To learn to write, you have to write (and write and write)." This is perhaps the most important thing for your child to do to become a better writer. People write best when they have something to communicate and when they see writing as the best way to do that communicating. Here are some suggestions to start you thinking:

1. **Have your child do writing as part of regular household responsibilities:**
   Make shopping lists, keep track of chore assignments, plan a party or trip (how many people will we invite, what kind of food will we need, how much will it cost?).

2. **Plan a family writing project:**
   Keep a family journal or a log of a family trip (encourage both writing and drawing in these activities).

3. **Encourage your child to write to relatives and friends who may be away from home:**
   Calling may be the 'next best thing to being there,' but writing will increase your child's reading and writing skills, plus it's always fun to get a reply. (It helps to choose people you know will write back).

4. **Be a good example for your child:**
   Show him or her that writing is a good way to communicate. Write to your child now and then--praising him/her for a job completed, reminding him/her of a special occasion. Write letters or cards to family and/or friends, write letters to the local papers, write complaints (or compliments) about products or services in letters. Make an occasion of both writing the letter and sharing the reply with your child.

5. **Encourage diary keeping:**
   To do this you'll need to respect the privacy of the diary and be open to those occasions when your child wants to share an entry with you. Why not keep a diary of your own following the same rules?

6. **Read and discuss the writing your child brings home to show you:**
   Don't just look over graded papers your child brings home from school, but all types including those written for fun or projects completed at Sunday school or at Scouts.

Remember basic skills develop with writing. Writing is practiced most in situations where it is valued and useful, television and telephones notwithstanding. So write away this summer and write away it will be September.

Enjoy your summer.

Sincerely,

Appendix C

Rules of Simulation Games and

Roles to be Played

Rules of Simulation Games

Envelope I

Time Allowed: 20 Minutes

Special Instruction: Each member is to take one of the white envelopes and follow the individual instructions contained in it.

Task: Researcher presents proposed study and group discusses it.

DO NOT LET ANYONE ELSE SEE YOUR INSTRUCTIONS!

(After twenty minutes go on to next envelope.)

Envelope II

Time Allowed: 10 Minutes

Task: Group members reach consensus on whether or not to cooperate with the study.

(After ten minutes go on to the next envelope.)

Envelope III

Time Allowed: 20 Minutes (15 minutes for Tasks A and B; 5 minutes for Task C)

Task A: Choose a recorder for your group who will take notes for your discussion.

Task B: Discuss the first two phases of the simulation game. Sample discussion questions:

1. Who were the different characters in the simulation?
2. How did the people in the simulation view research?
   —What is at stake for them?
   —What is to be gained?
3. What strategies did people in the simulation use to accomplish their goals?
   —What worked?
   —What problems were encountered?
   —Were these the only strategies that could have been used?
4. Could the simulated situation have really happened? Why? Why not?

Task C: Generate a list of the issues involved in gaining entry based on your group's experience. (This should be recorded on experience paper.)

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Sample of Roles to be Played

MAKING ENTRY- PRINCIPALS' MEETING

ROLE: Earnest
POSITION: Researcher

You are to present your proposed study to an administrative meeting of district principals. Generally describe your study and be prepared to answer questions.

ROLE: Reluctant
Position: Principal

You have admitted researchers to your school one time before. They took up much of the staff's time and energy, but did not share what they learned. You do not want this situation to be repeated.

ROLE: Supportive
POSITION: Principal

You are a curriculum leader supportive of change and innovation.

ROLE: Intervening
POSITION: Principal

You are concerned about how "basic skills" of writing are taught. You want a special report on this study from researchers.

ROLE: Protective
POSITION: Principal

You are an advocate of children's rights. Researcher(s) may have difficulty convincing you that the students' rights will be protected.

ROLE: Imposing/Intervening
POSITION: Principal

You have the responsibility of submitting teacher evaluations to the superintendent. You want the researcher(s) to do some of the work for you.

ROLE: Defensive
POSITION: Principal

You feel threatened because you have recently received adverse publicity about your school. You are anxious that researcher(s) make a commitment to present the findings publicly in a positive light to the school board and the community.